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SUBJECT: "SCORPIONS" VERDICT FUELS BOSNIAK GRIEVANCES

REF: A. BELGRADE 477

- [¶B.](#) SARAJEVO 753
- [¶C.](#) SARAJEVO 754
- [¶D.](#) SARAJEVO 807

**¶11.** (U) Sentences handed down by the Special War Crimes Court in Belgrade on April 10 for four members of the "Scorpions" military unit for war crimes against Bosniak citizens of Trnovo, Bosnia (ref A) have exacerbated tensions among Bosnians, already high as a result of the ICJ verdict. The sentences, particularly those of the two defendants who did not receive the maximum prison term and the acquittal of one defendant, have generated high-profile reactions from Bosnian politicians predictably divided along ethnic lines.

**¶12.** (U) On April 13, Haris Silajdzic, Bosniak member of the Tri-Presidency, characterized the sentences as a "frivolous political verdict" and suggested that Serbian authorities should extradite the defendants for trial in Bosnia since the crimes took place on Bosnian territory. Croat Presidency member Zeljko Komsic stated that justice was not served by the verdicts and that the Belgrade court had attempted to distance Serbian institutions from their responsibilities for genocide committed in Srebrenica. In response to the Silajdzic statement Milorad Dodik said on April 13 that the Trnovo events clearly constituted a crime and condemned the actions of the "Scorpions" unit but "biased people such as Silajdzic" should not comment on the case. Dodik stated that it was a significant that Serbia had convened a court that handed down the sentences it did. Dodik accused Silajdzic of acting as his own judge and seeking to impose his own verdicts. Serb Presidency member Nebojsa Radmanovic declined to comment on the verdict stating that the ruling required no further interpretation.

**¶13.** (U) Some segments of the Bosniak electorate, already angry over the ICJ ruling that genocide was committed in Srebrenica, point to the "Scorpions" sentences as evidence of their assertions that Bosniaks continue to be denied justice for wartime grievances. In addition to members who protested the verdict in Belgrade (ref A), the "Women of Srebrenica" organized an April 11 demonstration in Tuzla denouncing the verdict. Demonstrators characterized the "Scorpions" sentences as evidence of ongoing injustices faced by Srebrenica victims and disparaged the possibility that the sentences would be amended during the planned appeal by the Serbian War Crimes Prosecutor.

**¶14.** (SBU) Comment: The April 10 verdicts, following so closely on the heels of an ICJ ruling that has reopened old wounds in Bosnia, have been appropriated as additional fodder by political leaders and NGOs attempting to advance the issue of Srebrenica secession. Haris Silajdzic in particular has sought to keep the issue in the forefront by raising the extradition of the defendants despite the lack of an bilateral extradition treaty with Serbia. We anticipate that

leaders such as Silajdzic could continue to use the "Scorpions" verdict, among other issues, to radicalize Bosniak public opinion. End Comment.

MCELHANEY